

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE UPDATE

July 3, 2002

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has announced that they will test a minimum of 500 deer from each county in the state for CWD this fall. They will also test all deer harvested in the area around Mt. Horeb, their CWD eradication zone. Estimated number of deer to be tested is around 10,000 in Wisconsin.

USDA-APHIS has announced that they will not certify any private laboratories to test for CWD this fall. They state that the process of certification is too long to get both 5 additional state and university labs certified as well as private labs. There are already 6 certified labs and the addition of five new ones will provide for the processing of 375,000 samples this fall.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has announced that they will test 500 deer from the fall 2002 hunt this year for CWD.

New studies are underway at the National Prion Disease Pathology Surveillance Center at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio to determine if CWD can infect primates, the closest biological relative to humans. Additional studies on the human health side of CWD are also underway at the National Institute of Health's Rocky Mountain Lab in Hamilton, Montana. The Montana study is using mice that have had human genetic material inserted into them and then infected with CWD to determine if there is any impact on the animal.

A man from Thornton, Colorado has been diagnosed with the human TSE, CJD. Although no evidence exists that it is caused by CWD, the daughter of this man is on a mission to convince people that her dad is dying because he ate venison from the infected area. She states that it cannot be a spontaneous case of CJD (like all the other cases) because her dad ate venison for a number of years. This will probably cause untold rumors throughout the country on humans dying from eating CWD infected meat although there is no proof of such happening. The Center for Disease Control in Atlanta is investigating this case.

The elk ranch in Colorado's endemic area that had an elk test positive for CWD after it refused the federal buy-out has been turned into a research facility by Colorado State University. The ranch will be double fenced and water diverted to prevent contamination outside the pens. Additionally, the study will be halted and all animals killed if a CWD outbreak elsewhere is traced back to the ranch. The main aim of this study will be to determine how individual animals become infected with CWD.

Deer tested for CWD in Kansas all tested negative. Kansas Parks and Wildlife collected hunter harvested samples from western Kansas in November and also collected 50 deer in the vicinity of a captive cervid facility south of Wichita that had a positive captive CWD elk. All results were negative. Kansas Parks and Wildlife will continue testing hunter harvested animals this fall.